(a) the cities in the country where C.N.G. is proposed to be provided for the plying of buses during the next year;

(b) whether the Ministry is considering to open a C.N.G. filling station in Dehradun, the capital of Uttaranchal; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) GAIL (India) Limited proposes to take-up Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) distribution projects in Agra, Bareilly, Kanpur and Lucknow. CNG may be available for plying of buses in these cities from next year in a phased manner.

(b) and (c) No Sir. There are no plans to set up CNG station in Dehradun in the near future, as there is no pipeline network nearby from which natural gas may be made available for CNG purposes.

Status of tourism industry

*2. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) the present status of tourism industry of the country as compared to those of prominent countries; and

(b) what is the expectation for the current year and the steps taken to reach the target of three million international tourists for the country?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) During the period January to October 2003, international tourist arrivals to the country and foreign exchange earnings are estimated to be 2.11 million (growth rate 14.6%) and 2832 million US$ (growth rate 22.4%) respectively.

On the basis of information provided by World Tourism Organization for the current year, the performance of other prominent countries alongwith India is as follows:

Country	Growth rate in International Tourist Arrivals
France	-11.1
United States	-6.6
Italy	-2.2
China	-17.9
Canada	-12.3
Mexico	-6.5
Japan	-6.7
Philippines	-8.8
Thailand	-18.6
Myanmar	-26.0
Singapore	-27.7
Malaysia	-28.1
Indonesia	-29.5
United Kingdom	+ 1.5
Nepal	+14.8
Sri Lanka	+23.7
India	+ 14.6

(b)The Department of Tourism, Government of India has initiated the following short-term and long-term Plans to provide a major impetus to tourism:

* Positioning and maintain tourism development as a National Priority activity;
* Enhancing and maintaining the competitiveness of India as a tourism destination;
* Improving India's existing tourism products and expanding these to meet new market requirements;

* Creation of world class infrastructure;

* Special thrust to rural and small segment tourism;

* Attention to civilizational issues and issues pertaining to civic administration, good governance and also of social and cultural values; and

* Development of tourism circuits and tourism-cum-cultural hubs.

In addition the Government is implementing the following measures to attract tourists to India:

* Direct approach to the consumers through Electronic and Print media through the "Incredible India" Campaign.

* Creation of World Class Collaterals.

*' Centralized Electronic Media Campaign.

* Direct co-operative marketing with the Airlines, tour operators and wholesalers overseas.

* Greater focus in the emerging markets particularly in the region of China, North East Asia and South East Asia.

* Participation in Trade Fairs & Exhibitions.

* Optimize Editorial PR and Publicity.

* Use of Internet and web marketing.

* Generating Tourist Publications.

* Re-enforced hospitality programmes including grant of air passages to invite the media personnel, tour operators on familiarization tour to India to get first hand knowledge on various tourism products.

Profits of overseas branches of SBI and IOB

*3. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there had been drastic fall in the net profit of overseas branches of State Bank of India and Indian Overseas Bank during 2001-02, if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;